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Three Letters Containing Hints for the Improvement of our Establishments in India

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THREE LETTERS

CONTAINING

HINTS FOR THE IMPROVEMENT

OF

OUR ESTABLISHMENTS

IN

INDIA.

ADDRESSED TO

A NOBLE LORD,

BY

A PROPRIETOR OF EAST INDIA STOCK.

Printed in the Year MDCCLXXXI.

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LETTERS, &c.

LETTER I.

My Lord,

THE receſs of Parliament, by giving your Lordſhip a temporary releaſe from the fatiguing duties of the Houſe, has left you the leiſure to examine, with more attention, the various intereſts of the nation at this important criſis. Poſſibly there is no one of theſe ſo difficult for your Lordſhip to decide upon, no one ſo little underſtood by the public, as that which relates to our dominion in India; whether it be conſidered on the ſide of commerce, of revenue, or of politics: had it fortunately been otherwiſe, the intereſts of the Company, and thoſe of the nation, would never for a moment even have been conſidered in different points of view; nor would thoſe advantages

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which have been obtained, by the exertions of the Company, under the countenance and ſupport of government, at any time have been made the ſubject of contention between them.—It is with a view, my Lord, to obviate, as far as lies within my narrow abilities, ſuch prejudices, and to conciliate intereſts which, from their nature, ſhould ever be inſeparable, that I preſume to addreſs the following ſketches *immediately* to your Lordſhip.

Aware of the value and importance of your Lordſhip's time, I ſhall confine myſelf to the mere outline of ſuch ideas as have occurred to me. The few arguments which I ſhall venture to adduce, are principally drawn from experience: thoſe of wider ſpeculation, and of more enlarged policy, will be more effectually ſupplied by the abilities and judgment of your Lordſhip.

The chart of India will point out how the poſſeſſions of the Engliſh are ſurrounded, on every ſide, by the powerful rival ſtates that have been formed there out of the ruins of the Mogul empire: the march of the army from Bengal to Surat has ſhewn, by the apprehenſion it excited, the inconveniencies and dangers attending this peculiarity of ſituation: and the conqueſt and reſtitution of Tanjore, with the yet undecided claims of the Nabob of Arcot, are incontrover-

tible

rible proofs that, from the want of ſyſtem in our political conduct, we are daily adding to theſe difficulties.

Nor are our commerce and revenues in a ſtate of better ſecurity than our poſſeſſions; for, independently of the influence which our political ſituation muſt always have upon them, the former is now diverted into foreign channels from the want of a more regular courſe of remittance; and the latter cannot long reſiſt the effects of an accumulating ſpecie, locked up in the treaſury of Calcutta; for the expences of the Maratta war have cauſed but a temporary draft from that treaſury, which will be reimburſed with intereſt by the ſucceſs that we have now every reaſon to hope from it.

Theſe are ſuggeſtions that will have little weight with thoſe who think the natives of the Eaſt incapable of military exertion; and who conſider the empire and the commerce of India as decidedly ſecured to us by the expulſion of the French. But your Lordſhip's better judgment will have ſeen, in the late treaty concluded by the government of Bombay with the Marattas of Poonah in 1779, that the poſſeſſion of Pondicherry and of Mahé could not ſave the army of Bombay from ſubmitting to the moſt humiliating engagements: and the expedition pro-

jected from the French islands, though now rendered abortive by the success of the Bengal troops under general Goddard, must evince to your Lordship the necessity of the most vigilant policy on our side, to watch over, and to counteract the wily machinations of our enemies.

With regard to our commerce, the increased navigation of the Portuguese, the Danes, and the Dutch, with the reviving trade of Ostend, are proofs, that the extirpation of the French has only served to increase the number of our competitors; and that while individuals are precluded from a direct remittance to England, necessity will compel them to give their money to foreigners, who by means of a very high exchange, of funds for which they pay no interest, and of low wages to seamen, are enabled to undersell the English India Company in all the markets of Europe.

It is unnecessary to urge to your Lordship the evils attendant upon a reduced circulation of specie; but I cannot omit to remark, that it is not long since they were severely felt in Bengal, in consequence of the vast sums which were exported from thence to China; and it can need no argument to shew, that whether the scarcity of money be occasioned by the sending of it abroad, or by the locking of it up in a treasury,

the effects upon ſociety for the time muſt be alike.

The ſhort period of the Eaſt India Company's charter has hitherto ſupplied the Court of Directors with too good an excuſe for the temporizing, undecided plan which has of late been purſued. It is now expiring, and the public have reaſon to hope that your Lordſhip, in giving it a new eſtabliſhment, will give exertion and vigor to the machine of government.

It is from this view that I derive an additional motive to intrude this letter upon your Lordſhip, and that I propoſe (in my next) to enlarge upon ſome of the points that I have here but opened to your obſervation.

I have the honor to be,

My LORD, &c. &c.

LETTER

LETTER II.

My Lord,

IT is not yet a century ſince the Mogul empire attained its greateſt extent, and was governed with wiſdom and vigor by the politic Aurengzebe; yet the ſucceſſor of Aurengzebe doth not at this time poſſeſs a town which he can call his own. Thirty years are ſcarcely paſt, ſince the vaſt provinces of Berar, Malva, the Deccan, Viziapour, and the Carnatic, to Cape Comorin, were united under the government of the celebrated Nizam-ul Mulluck; yet the ſon of Nizam-ul Mulluck finds difficulty in keeping the disjointed Deccan ſubject to his authority; and the vaſt power of the Marattas, which within thirty years impoſed tributes throughout Indoſtan, is now divided into three ſeparate and diſcordant ſtates.

Revolutions ſo quick, and of ſuch importance, ſhew how much our political ideas upon India ſhould be determined by the particular characters of its reſpective rulers. If further proofs of this ſhould be thought neceſſary, they are offered to us in events ſtill nearer to our own time. The

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government of Myſore, weak and contemptible under its Raja, became powerful and formidable as ſoon as the enterpriſing Hyder Ally aſſumed the reins: whilſt the provinces of Bengal were no ſooner deprived of the ſteady rule of Aliverdy Cawn, than they were plunged into diſorder, and ripened for revolt. The military abilities of Mahadarow enabled the Marattas of Poonah, in the years 1770 and 1771, to revive the exorbitant claims of that nation, and to lay the Deccan and Myſore under contribution; when the early death of that chieftain, with the diviſions that followed relative to his ſucceſſion, preſcribed new limits to the ambition of that ariſtocracy, and added whole provinces to the dominions of the Soubah of the Deccan, and of Hyder Ally Cawn.

At preſent, the preponderating power is without a queſtion in the Engliſh; but this tenure too, my Lord, is precarious, for we no longer hold military diſcipline in monopoly; and it cannot derogate from the high reputation of Lord Clive, to aſcribe the rapid growth of this power, in ſome meaſure, to the enemy's ignorance in that art: this ignorance no longer ſubſiſts; every Mahommedan prince has now his battalions and artillery; and the creation of a reſpectable army, within the ſpace of three years,

by

by the Nabob of the Carnatic, not only unaided, but publicly discountenanced by the government of Madras, proves within how short a time we might be formidably oppoſed; for by the the ſame means whereby the Nabob of the Carnatic ſucceeded, that is, by employing the military adventurers who find their way to India, every other prince may form ſimilar eſtabliſhments, and no other will certainly have the complaiſance to diſband them at our deſire, as that Nabob has done.

Good policy, therefore, now calls upon us to provide againſt a danger, which, if left to extend itſelf, may threaten the very exiſtence of our government; and happily our own immediate intereſts, as well as the general tranquillity of India, point out to us the remedy.

From the ſituation of our poſſeſſions, we have neceſſarily been led into political connections with all the great powers of India; and from a variety of cauſes it has happened, that our arms are now employed in the North, to protect the dominions of Oud; in the South, to ſupport the Nabob of the Carnatic; and in the Weſt, to give a Chief to the government of Poonah; whilſt we ſtand engaged, by treaty, to ſend a military aid to Myſore and the Deccan, in the events of unprovoked hoſtility againſt thoſe powers; and are

opening

opening a negociation with the Raja of Berar, to eſtabliſh a brigade in his dominions.

Circumſtanced in this manner, it is no longer a queſtion, whether we can withdraw ourſelves within the limits of our own poſſeſſions, and confine our attention to their ſecurity and improvement; as we are evidently involved, under the ſanction of public treaties, in all the intricacy of a wide and yet unformed ſyſtem: but we have it in our power to give ſhape and conſiſtency to this ſyſtem; and in doing ſo, to ſecure permanency to our empire.

In Bengal, the foundation of this great ſtructure has been already laid by the treaty with the Nabob of Oud, which, by transferring to the Engliſh arms the protection of that country, has converted into a ſubſidiary ally the only formidable neighbour we had in the North. The treaty with the powerful Raja of Berar, whoſe poſſeſſions lie to the ſouth-weſt, has the ſame objects in view; and if it ſhould take place, will relieve the rich provinces of Bengal from every apprehenſion of danger, and reduce the charges of the military eſtabliſhment under that government, by nearly a fourth part of their preſent amount: as the Raja, like the Nabob of Oud, is to aſſign funds equal to the expenditure for the troops that may be ſtationed in his country.

Thus far, my Lord, we are well advanced towards this great object in the North; nor are we less forward in the South, where every resource of the Carnatic lies open to our power: yet, to complete it, we are still at a distance. The vast space between these extremities forms such a barrier to our communication, and separates Bombay so entirely from the other presidencies, that until we have converted the cold, disregarded treaties of defensive alliance, which now unite us to Misore and the Deccan, into a firm bond of union that shall give us military stations in those countries, we can have no absolute security for our own possessions, nor can we hope to maintain a controuling influence over the government of Poonah, without which the tranquillity of India can never be established and preserved.

It may not be uninteresting to your Lordship to advert to the causes which have hitherto kept back a system so advantageous to the public, and to the reasons why the present moment is particularly favourable for bringing it forward.

When the capture of Pondicherry, in 1761, had removed the last and only formidable obstacle to the establishment of Mahommed Ally Cawn in the Carnatic, the policy of our government saw the necessity of forming a counterpoise to the increased power and riches of that

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ally; and the general ſtate of India being then little known to us, this counterpoiſe was ſought for in Tanjore.

The ceſſion of the northern circars in 1765, by leading us into negociation with the Soubah of the Deccan, firſt extended our political views on the ſide of Coromandel, beyond the Carnatic, and gave us a territory to protect, not only independent of, but entirely ſeparated from, that country.

It was impoſſible that Mahommed Ally could ſee with indifference this new connection, or that the principle which had engaged us to ſeek a counterpoiſe to him in the Carnatic, ſhould not now operate on his part to make him oppoſe the progreſs of our union with his former ſuperior (the Soubah of the Deccan), as well as that which we afterwards contracted with Hyder Ally Cawn, the friend and ſupporter of his late rival Chunda Saheb.

Here, therefore, a political diſſention commenced between the Nabob of the Carnatic, and the Eaſt India Company; and it is in this diſſention that we are to look for the cauſe of the little intercourſe that has hitherto taken place between the Engliſh and the governments of Myſore and the Deccan. For the Nabob, jealous of the influence which theſe powers might have upon our

counſels, and fearful of the decline of his conſequence with us, in proportion to the dignity and conſideration of ſuch allies, oppoſed any communication with them, but ſuch as ſhould paſs through his agency; and the ſuſpicions which theſe powers entertained of him, precluded the negociation of any important object through him.

Fortunate would it have been for the Nabob, and for us, if our political diſſentions had produced no greater evils; and if by mutual conceſſions, in ſome inſtances, we had always kept in mind, that the reduction of the French, the eſtabliſhment of the Nabob's family, and the proſperous ſituation of our own affairs, had been the happy effects of our mutual confidence, and united efforts: we ſhould then have had no reaſon to charge him with diſtruſt in forming a ſeparate military eſtabliſhment, which threatened ſoon to render the aid of our troops unneceſſary for his protection; nor ſhould we have been liable to the recrimination of having (after aſſiſting him with our forces to reduce Tanjore) compelled him to reſtore that country to the Raja, under conditions of great pecuniary advantages to the Company.

But it is not my deſign to lead to invidious retroſpection; jealouſies are not to be healed by

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it; and beſides, the preſent ſtate of India requires a more enlarged ſcale of conduct than has hitherto been purſued. Syſtem and vigorous exertion are become abſolutely neceſſary in the adminiſtration of our affairs there; and neither the one or the other can be hoped for, until, forgetting paſt injuries and ſuſpicions, we cordially return to our former confidence; and until we adopt ſome honorable and conſiſtent plan for uniting the power of the Carnatic, and bringing it effectually under our direction.

This ſubject is probably now under your Lordſhip's conſideration: I will therefore only obſerve upon it, that the late revolutions at Tanjore, by making the Nabob feel our power, and by leaving him ſtill to hope from our friendſhip, have now totally removed the cauſe which kept us ſo long at a diſtance from the Soubah and from Hyder Ally: that the ſubſidy drawn from the Tanjore country, of near £ 200,000 a year, has greatly increaſed our reſources: and that no longer alarmed by the ambition of the Nabob, who, in diſbanding his army muſt have appeaſed our jealouſy, we are more than ever prepared to form an union with thoſe powers, upon the broad baſis of mutual intereſt and ſecurity.

The hour, therefore, ſeems now arrived, when your Lordſhip may, and I muſt add, when the

intereſt

intereſt of the nation makes it neceſſary, that you ſhould adopt a general and a decided plan of conduct, in reſpect to our poſſeſſions and government in India. We are at this moment free almoſt from the intrigues of the French; our army is augmented; the Soubah of the Deccan continues to ſolicit the aid of our friendſhip; the ſituation of the Maratta affairs calls for vigorous exertion; and the government of Myſore, though ſtill animated by the ſpirit of Hyder Ally, is not yet become powerful enough to diſpute our ſuperiority, or to diſregard the terms of our alliance.

Under circumſtances ſo favourable, can we heſitate to render ourſelves the umpires of India? we want no further extenſion of territory: we ſeek no new revolutions: we are at the zenith of our power: our intereſt, our future ſafety, and the common good of India, all unite in calling upon us to employ this happy criſis of our influence, for perfecting, with moderation and juſtice, a ſyſtem that ſhall ſet bounds to the future ambition of our neighbours, preſcribe limits to our own, and effectually ſecure to them, and to ourſelves, the undiſturbed poſſeſſion of our preſent reſpective dominions.

I have ſaid, that the Soubah of the Deccan continues to ſolicit the aid of our friendſhip:

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we impatiently desire, on our part, that he would convert our reversionary right to the province of Guntoor into present occupancy; for the most profitable articles of our trade are drawn from that province, which abounds with manufactures; its revenue is considerable; and it separates our northern possessions from the Carnatic.

The government of Madras opened a negociation last year upon this subject with Bazalet-Jung, he being, under his brother the Soubah, tenant for life of Guntoor; but either the mode they adopted, or the matter with which they accompanied their negociation, proved so offensive to the Soubah, and has been thought so exceptionable by the superintending council of Bengal, that it has been judged necessary to interpose the controuling power of that government: and the negociation with the Soubah is now in their hands.

Under the direction of Mr. Hastings it cannot fail of success, though it must be believed, that he will think no success complete, until, with the full possession of the province of Guntoor, he can obtain for the Company an absolute release from the tribute of £86,000 a year, which they are bound by treaty to pay to the Soubah,

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for that and the other provinces now in their poſſeſſion, and known by the name of the Northern Circars.

But conceſſions of ſuch importance are not to be obtained, my Lord, without ſome return; and the only one of any value which we can make to the Soubah, will be to lend him the aſſiſtance of our troops to be employed for the ſupport of his government, and the protection of his dominions; that is to ſay, for retaining in due ſubjection thoſe of his dependants, who, preſuming upon the general convulſions of India, arm upon every occaſion to oppoſe his authority; or thoſe, who ſeeing an exemption from tribute in the public diſturbances, cabal with the neighbouring powers to excite them, and in the moment of neceſſity ſtipulate with their ſuperior, before they will ſend him that aid to which he is entitled by the general conſtitution of Indoſtan.

The impoveriſhed ſtate of the Soubah's treaſury can be no objection at this time to our giving him the aſſiſtance of our troops, as the charges incident to ſuch a ſervice might be defrayed from the funds we ſhould hold in our own hands; as the tribute of £86,000, and the revenue of Guntoor, which may be eſtimated at

£100,000

£100,000 a year, would be more than adequate to the expence, and ſhould in reaſon be applied to it, until the ſervices we might render to the Soubah, ſhould enable him to make us other aſſignments.

Powerful, and confident as Hyder Ally may be in his own reſources, the jealous fears of an Indian court would not ſuffer him to ſee, without uneaſineſs, ſo marked an aſſurance of our attachment to the intereſt of the Soubah, whoſe claim of ſuperiority over the country of Myſore is ſtill unimpaired, even by any pretended conceſſion of the Mogul. It may too be preſumed that, drawing near the verge of life, the favorite object of Hyder's mind muſt now be to eſtabliſh the ſucceſſion in his family: and this might be endangered, if he were to die at enmity with us, for he is ſtill conſidered by the Myſoreans as an ungenerous uſurper; and their attachment to the Raja, whoſe place he has aſſumed, would probably diſcover itſelf under the countenance of an Engliſh army, co-operating on the North with the Soubah, on the South with the Nabob of the Carnatic, and in the Weſt, upholding the government of Poonah.

Hyder Ally is too wiſe and too experienced a politician not to ſee all the extent of ſuch a dan-

ger; and seeing it, not to provide against it in time, by soliciting that the government of Mysore may not be the only one excluded from our protection. Hyder Ally will therefore request a military aid from us, and propose assignments for its support: so that our very rivals, upon the principle of their own interest and security, will become instruments to put us in possession of what we are called upon, from so many motives, to make the first object of our policy.

The balance of India will thus necessarily be placed in our hands. With a decrease of expence we shall have a great increase of force: and our attention, drawn from our affairs at home by one object only, will leave us the leisure to investigate our internal system, and to correct its defects. Our population and industry will increase; plenty and happiness will diffuse themselves amongst our own immediate subjects; and every inhabitant of that extensive region will have cause to bless and pray for the preservation of that justice, policy, and moderation, which secure, upon the basis of British power and wisdom, the peace and happiness of India.

Inducements such as these become their own advocates. They need no ornaments of diction to give them weight. Founded upon facts, they are

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urged with confidence; and having reference to the great intereſts of the nation, they are addreſſed to your Lordſhip.

I have the honor to be,

My LORD, &c. &c.

LETTER III.

My Lord,

IN the preceding letter I have endeavoured to trace the outline of a political plan for the conduct of our interests in India, and to point out the advantages that may be derived from such a system. I must not, however, conceal from your Lordship, that the national wisdom hath not yet relieved the India Company from one great embarrassment in their military arrangements; and that without this aid, we may, in the very exertion of our policy, sow the seeds of our ruin.

I allude to the manner of recruiting the army in India, and the consequent difficulties, not only of completing the regiments, but of procuring any men fit for soldiers to engage in the service of the Company; although it is a fact beyond contradiction, that the appointments of the soldier are no where so high, nor more regularly paid; and I may venture to add, that the nation is no where more interested in having a well-formed European army, whether we consider its comparative numbers with the native troops in the service of the Company, the extent

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of empire to be protected, or the vaſt importance of its revenue, and of its commerce.

I will not intrude on your Lordſhip's leiſure by a detail of the embarraſſments and evils attending the preſent method of enliſting for India, as I am confident no man, who can be conſulted upon it, will undertake its defence; nor will I examine why the bills, that have at different times been propoſed to parliament for removing theſe embarraſſments, have failed of ſucceſs. The neceſſity of adopting ſome plan, by which the army in India may be well and completely recruited, has never before, perhaps, been felt in its full force. It is now only, that every motive of national honor, intereſt, and ſafety unite in calling the attention of the public to this object: it would therefore be unjuſt to conclude from any former diſappointments, that any man, or body of men, will now be found ſo wanting in duty to their country, as to oppoſe a meaſure calculated ſolely for the improvement of an eſtabliſhment, upon which our very exiſtence in the Eaſt is known to depend.

I underſtand the uſage in his Majeſty's ſervice in time of war is, to attach two additional companies to each regiment, the officers of which are conſtantly employed in England to enliſt men, who, as they are engaged, are ſent to Chatham,

Chatham, where they are disciplined, and held in readiness to be drafted, as the exigencies of the service, or the particular wants of the different regiments, may render it necessary. In India, my Lord, we are always to be considered in a state of warfare, at least good policy requires that we should be at all times prepared for active service; an institution, therefore, upon the same principle would be highly useful for recruiting the army in that country. Permit me then to ask, my Lord, why may not the Company be allowed to appoint officers from the different presidencies, to recruit publicly in this country and in Ireland? and why may they not be permitted to fix a general rendezvous, like that at Chatham, where their recruits may be formed to discipline, and kept to the healthful exercises of a soldier, until the moment of embarkation?

By some such means, I will venture to say, that the army in India might be made to receive a disciplined soldier in every recruit who might be sent thither; whereas, by the mode at present observed, they arrive raw and untaught, and one half at least are, from disease and decay, unfit for service. I will assert with equal confidence, that every recruit would then become a ready volunteer; for what soldier, who knows that he can purchase provisions in India at half the price

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he pays for them in England; that tobacco, linen, and arrack are in a ſtill cheaper proportion; that the pay of a foot ſoldier is *d.* a-day more than in a marching regiment at home; that he enliſts but for a limited time; and that, if invalided by ſervice, he can return to his own country with a daily allowance of one ſhilling, to ſpend where he may chuſe his retreat: What ſoldier, I repeat it, could reſiſt ſuch arguments? And permit me to aſk, my Lord, what arguments can be urged that ſhould prevent government from inveſting the Eaſt India Company with the liberty of recruiting the army for the protection of our valuable dominion in the Eaſt, upon a plan found uſeful in the ſervice of the crown.

If there are any objections to this plan, which I confeſs do not occur to me, but which poſſibly may to others; yet I truſt they will be found inconſiderable, when compared with the ſolid advantages which I have endeavoured to ſuggeſt to your Lordſhip.

I know it may be objected, that a mode ſo effectual for recruitiug an army at ſuch a diſtance, muſt unavoidably be a great drain upon that part of our population which is fit for military ſervice; but as ſome effective mode muſt be adopted, and as every ſuch mode muſt be followed by a ſimilar conſequence, this cannot be maintained as a particular exception to that which

is here propoſed. As a general objection, it muſt ever be conſidered as of ſerious import; and therefore I will hope to meet your Lordſhip's indulgence, as well as the wiſhes of every reflecting man, in propoſing a meaſure which cannot fail to leſſen this drain; and which, while it promiſes to ſupply our army with ſome uſeful ſubjects, will at the ſame time deprive the different powers of India of one of the principal ſources from whence they now draw their ſtouteſt and beſt diſciplined troops: I mean the offſpring of our ſoldiery.

All the governments of Europe, even thoſe where the abſolute power of the ſovereign ſubjects every man to military ſervice, have ſeen the utility of forming eſtabliſhments for the children of ſoldiers; and they are now adopted almoſt every where upon the continent, as certain and great reſources. In this country, and in our ſiſter kingdom, inſtitutions of this kind have been formed upon the larger ground of providing ſo many uſeful members to ſociety; the principles of our government, and the happy ſecurity we live under, rendering it equally unconſtitutional and unneceſſary to conſign any individual to a military profeſſion before he is qualified to make a choice for himſelf.

Were our poſſeſſions in India conſtituted as theſe iſlands are, or were they capable of receiving

ing such a constitution, it would be criminal to propose any less liberal plan: but whilst every profession is considered by the natives as an inheritance not only of the family, but of the cast; whilst the religious prejudices of a whole people are found to oppose the communication of these privileges to any out of their own tribes; it would be impracticable to form establishments in India upon the principle of our national institutions.

Whether then, my Lord, by some small abridgment of that national liberty which we, with so much reason, pride ourselves on in this country, shall we incorporate these children into a society, which commands respect in every part of the world? or shall we, by an inattention to the common duties of humanity, as well as policy, continue to augment the number of the already too numerous tribes of Pariars and Hallencores? —of fellow-creatures, born out-casts of society, and whose lives, in many parts of India, are at the absolute mercy of every individual, whom accident has exempted from similar proscription!

Your Lordship cannot hesitate upon the option to be made. Your decision must be in favor of a public establishment, and you will

yield to the neceſſity which directs that ſuch eſtabliſhments ſhould be merely nurſeries for the army, in which, from the habits of early exerciſe, the boys may be formed to diſcipline, and fitted for the ſervice.

The marine force of India does not leſs claim the attention of your Lordſhip: nor are the improvements which may be made in its eſtabliſhment, leſs conſequential than thoſe which may be ſuggeſted on the part of the military.

It is a fact of general notoriety, that the climate of India is ſo particularly unfavorable to the ſhips built of the materials of Europe, that thoſe which are ſent thither are found barely equal to the ſtation of three years, which is uſually fixed for the ſquadron in thoſe ſeas: while every man who has reſided in India can inform your Lordſhip, that the ſhips built in that country, are of an extraordinary duration, inſomuch that it is not uncommon to hear of a ſhip that has been in conſtant ſervice, thirty-five and forty years*, except, during the ſhort intervals of repairing.

* Voyage en Arabie, &c. &c. par Niebuhr, 1780. "Le bois dont les Indiens ſe ſervent pour leurs vaiſſeaux "(Tàk) eſt ſi dur, que les vers n'ôſent pas s'y frotter; "et de là vient que l'on trouve ſouvent, chez eux, des "vaiſſeaux qui ont 80 juſqu'à 90 ans."

This

This circumſtance amounts in itſelf to a demonſtration, that it would be for the public ſervice, that the ſhips deſtined for the Indian ſtation ſhould be built in India, provided the timber of that country ſhould be found of dimenſions proper for ſhips of the line; and if there are, or can be made, docks of ſufficient extent and capacity for ſuch a purpoſe.

With reſpect to timber, it is known that the Teak wood of India yields only to mahogany in its dimenſions; and I queſtion whether even the mahogany can rival it in its ſtately growth. This wood is produced in great abundance upon the coaſts of Orixa and Malabar; and in ſtill greater abundance in the country of Pegu, upon the eaſtern ſide of the bay of Bengal: ſo that whether we look to Bombay, as the great magazine for creating our Indian navy; or whether we carry our attention in part to the iſlands of Nicobar and Andaman in the bay of Bengal; in either, or in both events, timber fit for the conſtruction of large ſhips is to be found with ſo little inconveniency, that it would ſeem no difficulty could be ſuggeſted upon that head.

If it ſhould be objected, that the Teak wood is not applicable to all the purpoſes of the ſhipwright; yet that will be no diſcouragement, as

there grows, in moſt parts of India, another ſpecies of timber, the moſt eligible perhaps in the world, to ſupply what are termed the Knees in Ship-building, in general ſo difficult to be obtained of ſufficient dimenſions; the excellence of this timber reſults not only from its tortuous growth, but from the peculiar property it poſſeſſes, of acquiring ſtrength and durability in the ſea water.

How far the docks, already eſtabliſhed at Bombay, may be proper for the conſtruction of ſhips of the line, or how far it may be practicable to render them convenient for ſuch a ſervice, I will not preſume to determine. But there are men of local knowledge, and of profeſſional ability, now in England, whoſe information may decide your Lordſhip's judgment upon theſe ſubjects. It were to be wiſhed your Lordſhip could be referred to ſources of equal intelligence with reſpect to the iſlands of Nicobar and Andaman; for their ſituation in the bay of Bengal, between the 8th and 12th degrees of northern latitude, is particularly convenient for the command of that ſea, and conſequently for the protection of our poſſeſſions in Bengal, and on the coaſt of Coromandel.

But though I cannot pretend to direct your Lordſhip's enquiries upon this ſubject, I can yet, with

with great confidence, venture to encourage them, by requesting you will be pleased to turn for a moment to any chart of the Bay of Bengal: your Lordship will there find, that two of the Nicobar islands are placed in so happy a position, opposite to each other, and formed so particularly for the purpose of giving shelter to shipping, and of offering them a free passage at all times, either to the East or to the West, that our most sanguine imaginations could not picture to us a harbour with greater advantages for our fleets, than this one possesses. It has depth of water for our largest ships, and capacity for a greater fleet than we have ever yet maintained in the eastern sea. It lies in the latitude of 8—9 north. Its distance from Madras and from Bengal is inconsiderable, and the passage is often effected in five or six days: at the worst season of the year, in fifteen.

With a port like this to the eastward, our fleet would at all times be able to guard the entrance of the bay; for in the violence of the monsoon on the coast of Coromandel, all is tranquil on the coast of Tenasserim, and in the neighbourhood of these islands. The port of Merguey, to which the French retired in the monsoons during the last war, would no longer afford them a retreat; for without a superiority at sea, they would

would never venture to approach ſo near the place of our naval ſtrength, Merguey lying ſtill to the eaſtward of the Nicobars, on the coaſt of Tenaſſerim.

In addition to theſe advantages of ſituation, the vicinity of theſe iſlands to the kingdom of Pegu gives them a particular recommendation; not only on account of the Teak timber, with which that country abounds, but for the many valuable articles of commerce that may be drawn from it. We want but the countenance of ſuch a ſupport as our fleet, to revive our trade with Pegu, and to make the ſilver mines of that country contribute to incite the induſtry of our Indian manufacturers; the painted callicoes of Bengal and the coaſt of Coromandel having been, till of late years, in great requeſt in Pegu, where a large vent would again be opened, the moment the farmers of the cuſtoms there ſhould be made to reſpect the Engliſh flag, and to allow us the privilege of a free commerce, to which we were intitled by former treaties, though it has been denied us of late by the exacting avarice of theſe men.

The climate of India, though not ſo deſtructive of our ſeamen, as of our ſhips, does nevertheleſs, by expoſing them to the ardent influence of

of the ſun, ſubject them to very violent and dangerous diſorders. I ſay, my Lord, by expoſing them to the ardent influence of the ſun; for, abſtracted from that, I am convinced the climate of India is not unfriendly to our people. It is therefore particularly upon that account that I am induced to ſuggeſt to your Lordſhip, the idea of allotting to each ſhip of war, while in India, a certain number of Laſcars, or Indian ſailors, who ſhould be charged with the boat ſervice, and ſuch other duties as may relieve the Engliſh ſailor from the violence of this heat, and which may be performed by the native Indians without danger; for, accuſtomed from their infancy to the hot ſun of the Eaſt, there would be neither hardſhip nor inhumanity in impoſing ſuch duties upon them.

If I may be allowed to extend this idea, I would carry it to a temporary exchange, in India, of the marines belonging to the ſquadron, for an equal number of diſciplined Laſcars, to be returned when the fleet ſhould be called back to Europe, or relieved by other ſhips. We have ſuch unqueſtionable proof in our Seapoys, of what the natives of India are to be brought to, by diſcipline and regulations, that it cannot now be doubted, but that, under proper management, they may be made equal to any ſervice. The regimented Seapoys being compoſed of men

drawn indiſcriminately from the different caſts of the country, it would be impoſſible to prevail on them to ſubmit to the duties of marine ſervice; but a corps under the denomination of Laſcar Seapoys, might be formed for that purpoſe, and they would, without a murmur, take the place of the marines who might be landed, and who, by becoming a temporary reinforcement to the eſtabliſhment, would enable us to make exertions of our own ſtrength, at times when we ſhould not venture to hazard them without ſuch aſſiſtance. This further advantage would attend ſuch a plan, that in the event of any foreign expedition againſt Manilla, or to the continent of America, a body of men would be ready formed for embarkation, upon whoſe willing ſervices we might ſafely rely.

I will detain your Lordſhip no longer: I will reſt aſſured of finding my apology in the apparent conſequence and utility of my ſubject: in its moſt homely dreſs, it may awaken the attention, and claim the indulgence of your Lordſhip. I have endeavoured to confine myſelf to ſuch facts and propoſitions, as, from the experience of the evils they are intended to remedy, become in a great meaſure their own advocates: nor have I intruded upon your Lordſhip

ſhip a ſingle idea, that I did not think, from the pureſt conviction of my heart, was equally directed to the intereſts of the Company and of the nation.

Should theſe, or any meaſures ſimilar to theſe ſuggeſted, have the good fortune to meet the approbation of government, the Eaſt India Company may ſoon hope to find themſelves inveſted with powers adequate to carry them into execution; and the liberal exertions of the nation may happily co-operate in producing the extenſion of a ſyſtem replete with reciprocal and permanent advantages. Upon ſuch principles the Company may hope, both in the Cabinet and in the Senate, to find an advocate in the influence and abilities of your Lordſhip; and with ſuch wiſhes, your Lordſhip will permit an humble individual to ſubſcribe himſelf, with the higheſt reſpect,

Your Lordſhip's moſt obedient

and moſt humble ſervant.

It was my original intention to have troubled your Lordſhip with ſome further ſketches upon the ſubjects of the circulation and commerce of India; but as thoſe points would carry me to a great length, and as the latter of them has been treated in a late addreſs to the Court of Directors, I have ſuppreſſed them here, to give place to the following original letter, the date of which may afford authority, and in ſome degree tend to illuſtrate the general ideas before ſuggeſted to your Lordſhip.

To ———, Eſq.

May 27th 1774.

IN my laſt I promiſed to conſider with you, how far policy makes it neceſſary that the Company ſhould interfere in the general ſyſtem of India, and what benefits they may expect to draw from ſuch a conduct. The Act of Parliament you have ſent me, is come in time to encourage me to go on: for the preamble declares, that the preſent powers in the Company's repreſentatives are inſufficient, and therefore inſtitutes a new and ſuperior authority, which in all political matters is to direct the whole machine.

Whatever

Whatever ſuſpicions may be entertained of the views of government in this act, the experience of ſome years has fully ſhewn, that the plea upon which it is founded is juſt, and that a divided authority was very unequal to preſerve the poſſeſſions in Bengal, Bombay, and this coaſt, from the inſults or invaſions of the very powerful neighbours we have on every ſide: even this authority united will be inſufficient for ſuch a purpoſe, unleſs the influence of it, and of our military reputation, ſhould be improved by policy; and unleſs we take advantage of the peace in Europe, of the diſtracted ſtate of the Maratta affairs, of the embarraſſments of the Soubah, and the good diſpoſitions of Soujah Dowlah and Hyder Ally, to extend and eſtabliſh it in ſuch a manner as may give us the direction of the whole machine.

Do not call me chimerical for ſuggeſting ſuch an idea. Could I ſee by what other means the intereſt and honor of the nation could be ſecured, this idea ſhould not long have obtained with me; but when it is acknowledged by every one who has conſidered the ſtate of India, and our ſituation on this and the Malabar coaſt, that our preſent military eſtabliſhments are unequal to the protection of our own poſſeſſions, and thoſe of our allies which we have engaged to protect; and

when it is as well known that our resources are unequal to the support even of these establishments, it must I think be confessed, that our authority is but poorly supported; and that, unless we either go from our engagements and contract our possessions on both coasts, or form such further connexions with our neighbours, as may not only relieve us from our apprehensions of them, but give us the addition of their strength both in men and money, we shall be constantly exposed to alarms and invasions, and of course the advantage of the India possessions to the nation be made very precarious.

Call to mind what apprehensions were raised in Europe, and in every part of India, when the news was received that a large armament was at Mauritius. How many good reasons were then brought by those who thought a Maratta alliance most favorable to the French for their landing troops near Bombay, and attacking us on that side: and what consequences were drawn from a supposition of their success on that quarter. On the other hand, how many inducements were they supposed to have for joining themselves with Hyder; and what consequences were drawn from the supposition of their union. Even an alliance with the Soubah, or with the Cuttack Marattas, was well supported.

In

In ſhort, to judge from the variety of opinions and apprehenſions which prevailed at that time, one would be inclined to ſuppoſe every power in India the inveterate enemy of the Engliſh, and proportionably attached to the intereſt of the French. I do not mean to adopt this opinion; but yet there generally is enough of good ſenſe in the public opinion to juſtify my introducing it here; and to conclude from it, that in proportion as theſe different apprehenſions diſcovered our weakneſs, a firm eſtabliſhment with the principal powers in our neighbourhood would add to our ſtrength.

In this belief, and in compliance with your deſire, I have reflected much upon the ſubject of forming a confederacy with theſe powers; and for that purpoſe I have examined, as far as my poor abilities will allow me, all the arguments that have been urged againſt ſuch a plan. Before I attempt to anſwer them, I will acknowledge to you, that if the queſtion was, Whether the Company ſhall or ſhall not extend their political connexions on the coaſt of Coromandel, their trade and their dominions being as well ſecured to them now, and as free from being diſturbed, as they poſſibly can be rendered by any extenſion of their connexions?—I would be foremoſt in ſaying,

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ſaying, that nothing but wild ambition could heſitate upon the ſubject.

But as the experience of all countries, and particularly of India, tells us, that where there is no balance eſtabliſhed there muſt neceſſarily be contention, until ſome one power gains a decided ſuperiority over the reſt; and as the Company, it is to be believed, never will aſpire at a dominion extenſive enough for that, the queſtion now is, Whether they will ſuffer any other power to obtain this aſcendency? or, Whether they will take advantage of the unexpected and moſt fortunate opportunity which is now opened to them, for eſtabliſhing a balance, and holding the ſcale in their own hands? There are but few, I think, who will heſitate in declaring for the former; and the general voice will be to demand, how this can be eſtabliſhed?

Were I to anſwer ſuch a queſtion, it ſhould be by deſiring that public miniſters might be ſent directly to the Soubah's court, and to that of Hyder ally, with orders to correſpond together, and with the miniſter at the Maratta court, and all ſeparately with the preſidency of Madras, which being the reſidence of the Nabob of the Carnatic, ſhould be conſidered as the ſeat of political government on the Peninſula, ſtill ſubject to

the

the controuling power of the Supreme Council of Bengal.

But I may be told, that hitherto neither the poſſeſſions of the Company, nor of the Nabob, have been invaded without provocation; and that as our united ſtrength has been encreaſing, while that of the Marattas has been waſting by their diviſions and cabals, it may be hoped that by leaving things to themſelves, they may work into a ſyſtem; or that the diſagreements amongſt the other powers, may weaken them ſo much as to throw the aſcendancy into our hands.

Thoſe, however, who have read the records of the Company, will not ſay this, for they know, that although the poſſeſſions of the Nabob, and of the Company, have not been invaded without provocation; that yet they have been often threatened, and that if the extraordinary abilities of Hyder Ally, joined to the great reſources he had for money, had not made the Marrattas ſuſpend hoſtilities againſt him (I think it was in 1771) and if the death of Mahadirow, their Chieftain, had not ſoon followed this; the Carnatic, as well as Hyder's country, might by this time have been in their hands.

Nor will thoſe who know any thing of the character of Hyder Ally, and of the immenſe

ſtrides

ſtrides he has made ſince the death of Mahadirow, ſay, that our apprehenſions ſhould ceaſe, becauſe the greatneſs of the Marattas is no more. Let any one look to the ſituation of Hyder's dominions, ſpreading almoſt from coaſt to coaſt of the Peninſula, I might have ſaid entirely, for the Guntoor Circar, with its port, will always be open to him, whilſt Bazalet Jung lives; and let any one reflect what a government ſo compact, rich in all kinds of productions, and ruled by ſuch a man as Hyder Ally, or as his ſon Tippo Saib, at the head of the beſt eſtabliſhed Black army that has ever been ſeen in India, is capable of doing.

Let him reflect that this government muſt neceſſarily increaſe in power and ſtrength, as that of the Marattas declines, from the ceſſions which will be made to it, and the ſeizures it will itſelf make from the dominions of that power; that the Soubah's weak, and comparatively with Hyder's, defenceleſs ſtate, may afterwards render him an eaſy prey; and that with theſe additions of ſtrength, Hyder may fall upon our northern Circars, and upon the Carnatic at the ſame time; that with the Circars and the Carnatic, we have a neck of coaſt of near eight hundred miles from North Eaſt to South to defend, and a ſlip of country

country of near four hundred miles from East to West, and both coast and country skirted by the possessions of Hyder Ally.

Let any one reflect on these circumstances, and then say, whether our apprehensions should cease, because the Maratta greatness is no more. He will, I think, rather say, that a much greater power is rising up, and that all may be endangered, if timely measures are not taken to prevent it.

I think too he will confess that no other measure can be effectual, but that of establishing a balance of power, by dividing and yet upholding the Marattas; by strengthening the Soubah, in obtaining for him the districts which they have promised to cede to him; by getting a grant as soon as possible from him of the Guntoor Circar; by establishing a respectable black cavalry, under the command of the Company's officers; by becoming principals through the medium of our own agents at the several courts, still acting in concert with the Nabob; and by lending a military assistance to the Soubah, for the ESTABLISHMENT OF ORDER in his own government; the expence to be deducted from the annual tribute for the Circars, which, upon the cession of that of Guntoor, will become seven

lacks of rupees, and the releaſe from which would certainly be the reward of the ſervices the Soubah would receive, in point of finance and authority, from the aſſiſtance of our troops.

By theſe means, and by continuing a detachment with the Marattas, we ſhould not only inſure thoſe two powers in our intereſt, but from the influence that would give us, obtain a conſideration with Hyder, which might make him ſeek for an intimate connection with us, with as much warmth as he did in 1771, when he was ſo preſſed by the Marattas, as I have before obſerved.

It has been ſaid that the fort of Trichinopoly is a check upon Hyder on one ſide, and that the Bombay government bridles him on the other; and I know this opinion has prevailed, and with reaſon, ſo far as thoſe terms mean the preventing him from extending his conqueſts either in the neighbourhood of the fort of Trichinopoly, or of that of Bombay.

But we have no reaſon as yet to fear any attempts to take our forts from us; what we have to apprehend is, that our countries may be laid waſte from year to year, and neither Bombay nor Trichinopoly (if Trichinopoly, inſtead of a ruin, was as ſtrong as Bombay) could prevent

vent Hyder or the Marattas from doing this, whenever either ſhould be tempted to diſregard us.

For what protection can a garriſon give to a country that is open almoſt on every ſide, when large armies of cavalry break in to lay it waſte? All our troops can do in ſuch caſes, is to extend their protection for a few miles around their forts, and to ſhelter the poor inhabitants who may fly from their deſolated villages to ſeek ſecurity for the little they may bring away with them.

But if we are in cloſe alliance with Hyder Ally, the Marattas cannot diſturb us in the Carnatic, becauſe to do it they muſt paſs through his country; and if we are in alliance with them, we can have nothing to fear from him on the Malabar ſide, where they are all powerful; and the Soubah lying between both, muſt, as a friend, be a kind of barrier againſt each of them, and ſtrengthened as we ſhould ſtrengthen him, would be a great check upon them both.

But it may be urged, that the Company's troops ſhould be kept as much together as poſſible, and that the ſtationing any part at Hydrabad, or any where in the Soubah's dominions, would be removing them too far from the coaſt, and that in caſe of an alarm from the French

very bad conſequences might attend this. And certainly if the queſtion was ſimply, Whether the Company's troops would be in better order and diſcipline, and better prepared to reſiſt an invaſion from the French, when kept together near Madras, than when divided, the anſwer would be ſelf-evident.

But as this can never be the queſtion, while we have ſuch a powerful neighbour as Hyder encircling us on all ſides; as to guard againſt him, troops muſt always be kept in Tanjore, Trichinopoly, and Tennevelly, the latter of which is four hundred miles from Madras; as the Circars, beſides the forts upon the ſea coaſt, which extend ſix hundred miles from Madras, ought to have a back ſupport, and as the centre of the Soubah's dominions is but about three hundred miles from Maſulipatam on one ſide, and not five hundred miles from Bombay on the other; I confeſs I do not ſee any more danger to be apprehended from ſtationing a detachment with the Soubah, we having the funds in our own hands for paying it, than there is in ſtationing one in Tanjore.

At leaſt the great advantages of eſtabliſhing and keeping the balance of power in our own hands; the immediate poſſeſſion of the Guntoor Circar; and from it of a revenue of £100,000 more, appear

pear to me ſo greatly to counter-balance every objection that can be urged againſt the meaſure, that I am perſuaded, if ever it is thoroughly conſidered, they muſt prevail for its eſtabliſhment.

It may be ſaid, all this may be very juſt, but that yet, as the plan is a very extenſive one, the ſentiments of the Supreme Council, and of the Preſidencies of Madras and Bombay, ſhould be received upon it, before it is attempted to put it in execution; and that as we are now in perfect peace, encreaſing in riches and in ſtrength, no bad conſequences can attend the waiting for ſuch farther explanations as the public advices from the ſeveral preſidencies may give.

I know arguments of this kind are often uſed, and ſometimes even by thoſe who wiſh well to the public, and have minds capable of diſcerning its true intereſt, but who want reſolution to bring forward their ſentiments when the novelty and boldneſs of them make it probable that they may be oppoſed.

To ſuch men one might ſay, revolutions in India are often but the work of a day; that the Marattas, who but five years ago made all the other powers on the peninſula tremble, are now in need of being ſupported; that Hyder Ally, who not longer ago was almoſt reduced to nakedneſs,

neſs, is now a moſt formidable power; that the Company, having undertaken the mediation between the Marattas, are bound, as much in intereſt as honour, to prevent the interference of any other power for that purpoſe; that Hyder is ready, on one ſide, to ſeize upon thoſe diſtricts of their country which adjoin to his own; whilſt the Soubah, on the other ſide, is prepared to take poſſeſſion of thoſe which they have ceded, or rather engaged to reſtore to him; that the Company are under ſeparate defenſive engagements with the Soubah and with Hyder; and that now being engaged in the ſame manner to the Marattas, they are actually involved in all the extent of the ſyſtem.

It is worth ſtopping a little here to ſee how, without any plan laid down, without any concert between the preſidencies of Madras and Bombay, without any uniform principle of conduct even in the government of Madras, the Company have been imperceptibly embarked, and that for the moſt part of neceſſity too, in the political ſyſtem of the peninſula. This fact is the argument which ſhould be given to thoſe who, though convinced themſelves, want ſtrength of mind enough to undertake the conviction of others.

To ſmooth the way for them a little, we may add, that as local knowledge, and a perſonal acquaintance

quaintance with the intrigues and intriguing men about courts, muſt neceſſarily give great advantages to a miniſter; and that, on the contrary, as the want of ſuch information muſt ſubject him to difficulties, and poſſibly lead him into errors; the Company cannot begin too ſoon to procure theſe advantages to themſelves; and that therefore the appointment of miniſters to the ſeveral courts ſhould be immediately made upon the general grounds of policy, the great points to be left for farther reflection; if, after ſeeing ourſelves abſolutely embarked, and knowing the great advantages the preſent opportunity affords us, it ſhould ſtill remain a doubt, whether we ſhould now take meaſures for ſecuring the balance of power, and for holding the ſcale in our own hands.

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quaintance with the motives and intriguing men about courts, must necessarily give great advantages to a minister, and that, on the contrary, as the want of such information must subject him to difficulties, and probably lead him into errors, the Company cannot begin too soon to procure their advantages to themselves, and that therefore the appointment of minifters to the several courts should be immediately made upon the general grounds of policy, the great points to be left for further reflection, if, after leeing ourselves publicly embarked, and knowing the great advantages the present opportunity affords us, it should still remain a doubt, whether we should now take measures for securing the balance of power, and for holding the scale in our own hands.

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